1. A method for a client to access data files residing on a first data server through a network comprising:

coupling a heterogenous proxy server to the first data server through a first local network protocol;

receiving at the heterogeneous proxy server a data file from the first data server by employing the first network protocol;

translating the data file into a format compatible with transmission through the network; and

transmitting the translated data file to the client across the network.

2. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

sending a request from the client to the heterogeneous proxy server that the data file be received from the first data server and then sent to the client.

3. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

coupling the heterogenous proxy server to a second data server through a second local network protocol, the first and second local network protocols being different;

selectively receiving at the heterogeneous proxy server a data file from at least one of the first or the second data servers by employing the respective first or second local network protocols;

translating the data file into a format compatible with transmission through the network; and

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transmitting the translated data file to the client across the network.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein the HTTP-capable network employs Transport Control Protocol (TCP).

5 5. The method of claim 1 wherein the format compatible with transmission through the network is HyperText Transport Protocol (HTTP).

6. The method of claim 1 wherein the format compatible with transmission through the network is a

10 Multipurpose Internet Mail Extension (MIME) of HTTP.

7. The method of claims 1 or 3 wherein the first and second local network protocols each comprise one of the following:

Windows Networking (SMB), File Transport Protocol

15 (FTP), Network File System (NFS), Banyan VINES, DECNet, or AppleTalk.

8. The method of claim 1 wherein the client employs an HTTP browser for connecting to the heterogeneous proxy server.

20 9. The method of claim 8 wherein the client receives an HTML document from the heterogeneous proxy server containing information from the heterogeneous proxy server regarding available data files on the data server.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein the HTML document

25 allows the client to send a request for the data file to the heterogeneous proxy server.

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11. The method of claim 8 wherein the client downloads an applet executable by the HTTP browser, the applet configured to receive information from the heterogeneous proxy server regarding available data files on the data server.

12. The method of claim 11 wherein the applet is configured to send a request for the data file to the heterogeneous proxy server.

13. The method of claim 8 wherein the browser, upon receiving the data file, initiates an appropriate application for using the data file.

14. The method of claim 1 further comprising compressing the data file at the heterogeneous proxy server before the data file is transmitted to the client.

15. The method of claim 1 further comprising e-mailing the data file from the heterogeneous proxy server to an e-mail recipient, without transmitting the data file to the client.

16. The method of claim 1 further comprising having the heterogeneous proxy server search for data files at one or more data servers coupled to the heterogeneous proxy server.

17. The method of claim 1 further comprising authenticating the client before connecting the client to the heterogeneous proxy server.

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18. A method for a client to access data files residing on at least a first and a second data server through a network, wherein the network employs Transport Control Protocol (TCP), comprising:

5   coupling a heterogenous proxy server to the first data server through a first local network protocol, and to the second data server through a second local network protocol, the first and second local network protocols being different;

10   sending a request from the client to the heterogeneous proxy server that the data file be received from the first or second data servers and then sent to the client, wherein the client employs an HTTP browser for connecting to the heterogeneous proxy server;

15   selectively receiving at the heterogeneous proxy server a data file from at least one of the first or the second data servers by employing the respective first or second local network protocols;

       translating the data file into a format compatible with
20   transmission through the network, comprising HyperText Transport Protocol (HTTP); and

       transmitting the translated data file to the client across the network.

       19. A storage device tangibly storing a control
25   program, the control program, when coupled to a control device, operating the control device to allow a client to

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access data files residing on a first data server through a
network, the control program being configured to operate the
control device to perform the functions of:

coupling a heterogenous proxy server to the first data

5   server through a first local network protocol;

receiving at the heterogeneous proxy server a data file
from the first data server by employing the first local
network protocol;

translating the data file into a format compatible with

10   transmission through the network; and

transmitting the translated data file to the client
across the network.

20.   The storage device of claim 19 wherein the
software program operates the control device to receive a

15   request from the client to the heterogeneous proxy server
that the data file be received from the first data server
and then sent to the client.

21.   The storage device of claim 19 wherein the
software program operates the control device to allow a

20   client to access data files residing on the first and a
second data server through the network, the control program
being configured to operate the control device to perform
the functions of:

coupling the heterogenous proxy server to the second

25   data server through a second local network protocol, the
first and second local network protocols being different;

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selectively receiving at the heterogeneous proxy server a data file from at least one of the first or the second data servers by employing the respective first or second local network protocols;

translating the data file into a format compatible with transmission through the network; and

transmitting the translated data file to the client across the network.

22. The storage device of claim 19 wherein the network employs Transport Control Protocol (TCP).

23. The storage device of claim 19 wherein the format compatible with transmission through the network is HyperText Transport Protocol (HTTP).

24. The storage device of claim 19 wherein the format compatible with transmission through the network is a Multipurpose Internet Mail Extension (MIME) of HTTP.

25. The storage device of claims 19 or 21 wherein the first and second local network protocols each comprise one of the following:

Windows Networking (SMB), File Transport Protocol (FTP), Network File System (NFS), Banyan VINES, DECNet, or AppleTalk.

26. The storage device of claim 19 wherein the client employs an HTTP browser for connecting to the heterogeneous proxy server.

27. The storage device of claim 26 wherein the client receives an HTML document from the heterogeneous proxy server containing information from the heterogeneous proxy server regarding available data files on the data server.

5   28. The storage device of claim 27 wherein the HTML document allows the client to send a request for the data file to the heterogeneous proxy server.

29. The storage device of claim 26 wherein the control program allows a client to download an applet executable by

10   the HTTP browser, the applet configured to receive information from the heterogeneous proxy server regarding available data files on the data server.

30. The storage device of claim 29 wherein the applet is configured to send a request for the data file to the

15   heterogeneous proxy server.

31. The storage device of claim 26 wherein the browser, upon receiving the data file, initiates an appropriate application for using the data file.

32. The storage device of claim 19 wherein the control

20   program is further configured to operate the control device to compress the data file at the heterogeneous proxy server before the data file is transmitted to the client.

33. The storage device of claim 19 wherein the control program is further configured to operate the control device

25   to e-mail the data file from the heterogeneous proxy server

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to an e-mail recipient, without transmitting the data file to the client.

34.   The storage device of claim 19 wherein the control program is further configured to operate the control device to have the heterogeneous proxy server search for the data files at one or more data servers coupled to the heterogeneous proxy server.

35.   The storage device of claim 19 wherein the control program is further configured to operate the control device to authenticate the client before connecting the client to the heterogeneous proxy server.

36.   A storage device tangibly storing a control program, the control program, when coupled to a control device, operating the control device to allow a client to access data files residing on at least a first and a second data server through a network, wherein the network employs Transport Control Protocol (TCP), the control program being configured to operate the control device to perform the functions of:

coupling a heterogenous proxy server to the first data server through a first local network protocol, and to the second data server through a second local network protocol, the first and second local network protocols being different;

receiving a request from the client to the heterogeneous proxy server that the data file be received

from the first or second data servers and then sent to the

client, wherein the client employs an HTTP browser for

connecting to the heterogeneous proxy server;

selectively receiving at the heterogeneous proxy server

5   a data file from at least one of the first or the second

data servers by employing the respective first or second

local network protocols;

translating the data file into a format compatible with

transmission through the network, comprising HyperText

10   Transport Protocol (HTTP); and

transmitting the translated data file to the client

across the network.